

REVISIONS WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE SPECIFICATION

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In a friction stir welding process a tool is used which comprises a shank, a body (sometimes with cooling fins), a shoulder and a pin. There are a wide variety of different tool designs. The tool is usually made from tool steel and may have a specialised coating. The tool is inserted into what is, in essence, a milling machine. The pin is lowered onto the two plates to be joined. The rotation of the pin heats the metal until it softens. At this point the pin is pushed downwards so that the shoulder comes into contact with the metal plates. The shoulder has a concave profile so that the tool locates the plasticised metal displaced by the pin. The shoulder[should] now begins[beings] to heat a larger volume of the metal. Eventually enough metal is soft enough to allow the pin to be traversed through the metal plates. The pin stirs the plastic metal surrounding it and therefore joins the two plates together. The process then continues with the pin and the shoulder heating the metal so that it is plasticised and the pin stirring the metal plates together.